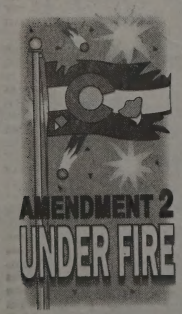
STATE

# Schroeder seeks federal civil rights protection for gays

Gazette Telegraph and news services

U.S. Rep. Pat Schroeder has introduced a bill in Congress that would amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to prohibit discrimination against homosexuals.




At a news conference Monday in Denver, Schroeder said she hopes organizations that have been focusing their energies on boycotting Colorado will get behind the passage of federal legislation.

Her amendment would add homosexuals to groups already protected by federal law and likely would supersede state laws such as Amendment 2 — the Colorado law approved by voters in November that prohibits state or local laws that protect gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

Schroeder said the controversy over Amendment 2 will improve the law's chances of passing in the 103rd Congress.

Aides said Schroeder also will ask the congressional subcommittee handling the bill to hold field hearings in Colorado to help judge the magnitude of discrimination in the wake of Amendment 2.

"States' rights used to be code for racism," she said. "I think it's now code for homophobia," Schroeder said.

Schroeder and other legislators have introduced similar bills each year since 1975 and either have failed to gain a majority in Congress or faced opposition in the White House.

Some observers, however, say President-elect Bill Clinton's proposal to lift the ban on gays in the military is taking center stage in Washington and could make federal civil rights protection for homosexuals less of a priority. Many Colorado residents say they oppose discrimination against homosexuals but don't want them to have the access to the same affirmative action or quotas extended to racial and other minorities.

**Schroeder: Pushes for amendment to Civil Rights Act.**

In other Amendment 2 news:

■ A discussion on boycotts of Colorado because of passage of Amendment 2 will be aired at 7 p.m. Thursday on KTSC-TV, Channels 8/15. The hourlong program, "Standoff," will feature representatives from Boycott Colorado, B.A.C.K.O.F.F. Colorado, the Gay and Lesbian Advisory Board and Colorado for Family Values, the organization that wrote the amendment.

Viewers are welcome to call in questions during the program at (800) 388-6183 or fax questions prior to the show at 1-549-2208.

■ The Screen Actors Guild's board of directors has rejected a resolution that would have endorsed the boycott of Colorado, but did approve a measure condemning Amendment 2. The guild will support "all appropriate efforts to overthrow Amendment 2 and counteract its purposes," according to the resolution passed Sunday, but it added that a boycott would be devastating to the 500 guild members who reside in Colorado.

■ Denver software entrepreneur Tim Gill has convinced banking giant Norwest Colorado Inc. to amend its existing anti-discrimination policy to include sexual orientation. Gill, who founded Denver-based Quark Inc. and built it into a software leader for the publishing industry, has been a vocal opponent of Amendment 2 and a contributor to efforts against it.

The change was "a result of Norwest management reflecting upon Amendment 2 and the feeling of how it wishes all of its employees to be treated," said Norwest spokeswoman Peg McKechnie. She said she did not know if the new policy was a result of Gill's request.

Norwest has four banks in El Paso County and is the county's largest mortgage lender.

■ Former Texas Commissioner of Agriculture Jim Hightower has canceled a trip to Colorado, saying he supports a boycott of the state. Hightower officially notified the Colorado Farm Show in Greeley on Monday that he would not be coming. He was scheduled to give the keynote at the annual event Jan. 26. He also had an appearance scheduled in Denver on Jan. 25 to promote his new radio show.

FOR THE RECORD

# Charter/Other issues may be added

From B1

dence with respect to financial matters." Isaac is one such person; he's a nonpracticing attorney who generally devotes most of his time to City Hall duties.

While they voted unanimously to put the pay question before voters, some council members suggested a lower salary. Councilwoman Lisa Are wanted $6,250 a year, which the council-appointed charter committee had said would be more palatable to voters.

Meanwhile, the council placed six other issues before voters: easier rules to get recalls and referendums on the ballot; a limit on special-district debt; a requirement for the council to establish annual goals; a requirement that petition circulators be registered city voters; and two housekeeping measures.

One other proposal, requiring the City Council to operate under the state Open Meetings Act, will be considered Jan. 26. Council members couldn't decide Tuesday whether to include the entire text of the law as part of the charter should voters

## ON THE BALLOT

**On Tuesday, the Colorado Springs City Council placed seven City Charter amendments on the April 6 municipal ballot, several of which were suggested by a civic group that spent 1½ years studying the charter. Ballot proposals include:**

- **COUNCIL PAY:** Set annual salaries of $12,000 for the mayor and $10,000 for council members. **Purpose:** Compensate council members — now unpaid — for time they take away from their regular jobs.
- **RECALLS AND INITIATIVES:** Reduce the number of petition signatures needed to get referendums and recalls on the city ballot — tying the number to votes cast in mayoral elections instead of gubernatorial elections. **Purpose:** Make it easier for the public to place such measures before voters.
- **PETITION CIRCULATORS:** Require people who pass petitions on city issues to be registered city voters. **Purpose:** Prevent special interests from hiring out-of-state name collectors with no interest in local issues.
- **SPECIAL DISTRICT DEBT:** Limit the amount of money that new special districts can borrow to pay for public improvements. The limit would be no more than 10 percent of their property tax base. **Purpose:** Prevent the financial collapse of special districts, which has happened in a handful of Colorado Springs neighborhoods.
- **GOALS:** Require the council to establish an annual set of goals. **Purpose:** Keep the council focused on key issues.
- **HOUSEKEEPING:** Allow city officials to renumber and rearrange the charter and delete sections that refer to the city's surplus and deficiency fund and libraries. **Purpose:** Remove obsolete provisions. The surplus and deficiency fund no longer exists; the city no longer operates libraries.

cause utilities has become so large — its $400 million budget is nearly four times as big as that of general city operations — the council should have more

The 0.5-cent portion shrank to 0.4 cents Jan. 1 — the result of April 1991 tax cuts adopted by city voters and which are being phased in throughout several

STATE

# Lawmakers face daunting tasks

## Schools, prisons and Medicaid top Legislature's list

By **Ray Flack**/Denver Bureau

DENVER — Faced with challenges that center on money, money and money, state lawmakers will begin their annual 120-day legislative session today.

The 100 members of the state House and Senate will tackle ways to keep the public school system afloat, contain an overflow prison population and fend off skyrocketing Medicaid costs.

Amendment 1, which limits the government's ability to raise taxes and sets limits on spending, will take center stage and cause the most misunderstanding.

School finance will likely be taken up early in the session. Schools get their money from local property taxes and from the state, which gets the bulk of its funds from income and sales taxes. None of those taxes can be raised without voter approval.

The House and Senate will have a different look. Republicans have a 34-31 edge in the House, and 19-16 in the Senate. There will be 21 new faces in the House and six in the Senate.

Republican Chuck Berry of Colorado Springs will return as House speaker, banging the opening gavel at 10 a.m.

The Senate has a new leader, Republican Tom Norton of Greeley. He replaces Ted Strickland, a Westminster Republican, who had logged 25 years in the Legislature until he was defeated in November.

And, the first demonstration of the session will get under way at 4 p.m. when teachers and education administrators stage a march at the Capitol. Dan Morris, president of the Colorado Education Association, will make a short talk urging lawmakers to make school funding their top priority.

# Avalanches prompt travel warning

Associated Press

cording to the Eagle County

Center.